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Letter dated 12 September 2002 from the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations
New York

No. 2005/5/2002

New York, 12 September 2002

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Hammoud, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, concerning the most recent Israeli threats against Lebanon in connection with the drawing of water from the Hasbani and Wazzani rivers.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 36, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Houssam **Diab**
Deputy Permanent Representative

* A/57/150.

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Annex to the letter dated 12 September 2002 from the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

New York, 12 September 2002

With regard to the threats addressed to Lebanon by Israel concerning the waters of the Hasbani and Wazzani rivers, dealt with in my earlier letter to you dated 23 March 2001 (a copy of which is attached hereto), I should like to mention the following:

Since the liberation of most of the South and the Western Bekaa, Israel has persistently threatened Lebanon with aggression. During the past few weeks it has stepped up those threats, alleging that Lebanon is attempting to divert the course of the Hasbani River. Lebanon wishes to clarify the facts of this matter:

The Wazzani River, one of the tributaries of the Hasbani, arises in Lebanese territory and feeds into the Hasbani inside Lebanese territory.

From the time it occupied southern Lebanon and the Western Bekaa, Israel set out to destroy installations and displace the population while preventing those remaining in the region from availing themselves of the waters of the Wazzani and Hasbani rivers. Since 1978, Israel has been intent on gaining possession of all the waters of the two rivers, or approximately 160 million cubic metres yearly.

Following the liberation of the South and the Western Bekaa, the Government of Lebanon embarked upon a plan to redevelop the South and to provide for the needs of the people in terms of drinking water and water for irrigation. The quantity of water of which Lebanon has been availing itself since liberation is estimated at approximately 7 million cubic metres yearly. This is a very small amount that falls short of the natural requirements of the region's population, based on international laws and customs and the provisions of the Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, which entitle Lebanon to ensure the social and economic needs of the population of the basin of the Hasbani and Wazzani rivers.

At present the Lebanese authorities are laying pipes to ensure the supply of water to the villages in the basin of the Hasbani and Wazzani rivers. The maximum quantity to be pumped will be 9 million cubic metres yearly, which is far below Lebanon's legitimate entitlement.

Every effort by Lebanon to provide for the vital needs of the populations of the liberated areas and villages has met with Israeli threats to wage war against Lebanon.

Today Lebanon finds itself once again faced with threats by Israel to wage war against it and deprive it of its lawful and natural rights to its water. Yet the water which Israel is attempting to seize originates in Lebanese territory and Lebanon is entitled to exploit it in accordance with its legitimate rights, international law and the vital needs of its population.

The statements of Israeli officials to the effect that Israel will wage war against Lebanon threatens international peace and security in the region. The responsibility for any consequences of such a situation falls fully on Israel, which is relentlessly

pushing towards an aggravation of the situation, ignoring Lebanon's definite desire to maintain peace and stability notwithstanding its constant demands for the liberation of the rest of its occupied territory. Lebanon appeals to the permanent members of the Security Council to make every effort to prevent Israel from carrying out its threats of waging war, which would have the direst consequences for the entire region.

I should like to mention that today, 12 September 2002, the purport of this letter was communicated to the ambassadors accredited in Lebanon of the States permanent members of the Security Council.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(*Signed*) Mahmoud **Hammoud**
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants

Enclosure

Beirut, 23 March 2001

I should like to inform you of some disturbing developments that need to be brought to your attention.

While Lebanon is proceeding to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by Israel during the 22 years of the occupation and to meet its responsibility to provide vital services to the villages and areas liberated from Israeli occupation, Israel is confronting us with further threats based on allegations and delusions in preparation for the launching of fresh attacks on Lebanese territory on the fabricated grounds that Lebanon has set about diverting the course of the Hasbani river and depriving Israel of its water.

The fact is that on 20 February 2001 the competent Lebanese authorities began to lay a pipe from the Wazzani spring in order to supply water to the villages of Wazzani and Maysat in response to a request from the inhabitants to resume the pumping of water to the villages that had been customary before the Israeli occupation. In its time, the latter had deliberately destroyed the Lebanese pipeline and pumps and had deprived the population of the use of the water for drinking, household use or irrigation.

After technicians were sent to make a physical inspection and assess the needs and the measures required to meet them, work began on the provision of water with the building of a hut near the spring for the installation of pumps, the laying of a 4-inch-diameter pipeline and the erection of electricity poles so that the pumps could be operated by electric power.

The technical teams continued their work of bringing water to Wazzani and Maysat in the midst of overflights by warplanes and helicopters in Lebanese airspace in flagrant violation of Lebanese sovereignty. This was accompanied by intense and distrustful monitoring by the Israeli military from beyond the border fence and by casual and brazen crossings of the Blue Line established by the United Nations. It should be noted that the authorities in question had notified the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) of the nature of the project and had requested its help in providing protection for the workers as a precaution against Israeli provocations or hindrances.

While, in accordance with its legitimate rights and in order to meet the vital subsistence requirements of the inhabitants, Lebanon is endeavouring to bring water that rises in and flows through its own territory to two impoverished villages that have been deprived of it, Israel is waging an escalating campaign against it that is freighted with allegations that Lebanon will withhold the water of the Hasbani river from it by taking operational measures for this purpose, and it is threatening, through the official Israeli military and civil authorities, to launch a war against Lebanon and to direct a military strike against the Lebanese installations designed to bring water to the two villages.

In the light of the foregoing, Lebanon would like to state as follows:

1. The Israeli allegations are devoid of truth and have the objective of obstructing Lebanon's restoration to health and the rebuilding of the infrastructure destroyed by Israel during the years of its occupation of southern Lebanon. The

work is being carried out openly and with the knowledge of UNIFIL, as has been confirmed by Mr. Timur Göksel in a statement refuting the allegations made and denying that Lebanon was engaged in diverting the waters of the Hasbani river. He has stated that workers were installing a 4-inch-diameter pipe to convey water from the Wazzani spring to an impoverished village in need of it, and that it was not possible to speak of diverting a river by using such a small pipe. Mr. Göksel's statement reflects the reality of the situation in a manner that is not devoid of frank astonishment at the Israeli claims.

2. Lebanon affirms its right to its own water, and it rejects Israeli attempts to expropriate and exploit it.

3. It alerts the Secretariat to the Israeli threats to launch fresh attacks on its territory and installations, and it will hold Israel responsible for the consequences of any act of aggression against such installations. It calls upon you to take the necessary measures, on an urgent basis, to deter Israel from its threats and its violations of Lebanese sovereignty.

4. I take this opportunity to express the appreciation of the Lebanese Government for the impartial attitude adopted by the United Nations in southern Lebanon following the recent Israeli threats in connection with this matter and to thank the Organization for UNIFIL's continued fulfilment of its mandate and, in particular, for the humanitarian assistance and medical care it provides to the local inhabitants and for its active participation in the task of clearing the mines laid by Israel in the area.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mahmoud **Hammoud**
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants